Ken Foster is a Professor and Head in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University. Ken teaches applied economics and applied economic time series analysis and conducts research and outreach focused on agricultural production, policies, and markets – particularly as they related to the livestock and meat sectors. Ken has served AAEA in the past as Chair of the National Association of Agricultural Economics Administrators section, Chair of the Quality of Research Discovery Selection Committee, and a Coordinator of AAEA Abstract Reviews. Ken received the AAEA Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award and a similar Award from the Purdue College of Agriculture. He has also received AAEA recognition for Team Extension Activities on three occasions.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for AAEA?
The challenges and opportunities facing AAEA are similar to those facing the academic and research institutions where most of its members reside; relevance and accountability to a broader set of stakeholders. Confronting a public that places low value on and low trust in scientific findings, we face a growing need to maintain and increase our relevancy – and we can do this by holding ourselves accountable to a broader set of needs in the public when deciding our orientation.

What actions would you initiate to address the challenges and opportunities described in your response to the previous question?
We can do this by improving our cooperation outside of the academy of applied and agricultural economists - both from a problem identification perspective and in the way we communicate our knowledge. Stronger partnerships between societies and with industry and consumer groups will enhance our relevance and ability to communicate discoveries to a broader audience. In addition, new joint activities can be vetted through a lens of, ‘how does this matter?’ and ‘to whom does this matter?’ so we can constantly ensure we are staying on course.

At the end of your three-year term, what changes/new initiatives would you have helped create?
I envision more participation in AAEA activities by industry and consumer groups. I also anticipate more active and strategic partnering across professional societies with interest in applied economics and applied business management. Specifically, I hope these partnerships result in enhanced communication about our discoveries, their relevance to important issues and a broader awareness and appreciation for what we, as a profession, contribute to the public good.